

2-17-1974

Letter to the National News Council Members

Ottwill I. Benson

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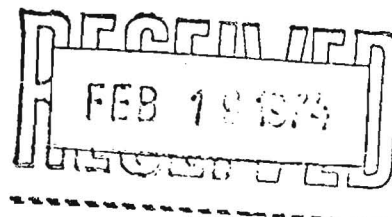
Ottwill I. Benson, *Letter to the National News Council Members* (1974).
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53 Waverly Road,
Havertown, Pa. 19083

February 17, 1974

National News Council,
1 Lincoln Plaza,
New York, N.Y. 10023



Gentlemen:

I have been encouraged by more than one public official and newsman to send copies of the enclosed "letter" to (as one Congressman put it) "any and all public officials, members of the press and press executives " who I feel might be prompted to take some action to bring about improvement in what I call "journalistic morality", particularly on the part of the broadcast media.

As I understand it the National News Council is also interested in bringing about such improvement, at least in connection with "fairness", diversity of editorial comment, and the like.

My only claim to "fame" is that, being a "nobody", I must certainly be representative of millions of American citizens. For that reason perhaps someone at the Council will have the time, and patience, to read my comments.

Perhaps I am overly disturbed at what I consider to be monopolistic one-sidedness of the three major networks, and no doubt some "conservative" bias shows up in my comments, but I would still maintain that the suggestions I offer in my comments are worthy of consideration. In fact, since I am no genius or "messiah", I would be willing to bet that there are people of prominence even, making the same, or similar, suggestions. Truly, in my opinion, "everything to gain and nothing to lose", if we enlighten the Public on the mechanics and unavoidable human frailties of the entire news "industry".

Sincerely yours,

Ottwill I. Benson

WARNING

The enclosed material may be dangerous to your ego,
depending on who you are.

In spite of internal conflicts, mistakes and misgivings, the United States of America is still a great nation and certainly among the best, if not the best example of FREEDOM to the rest of the world. Whether or not it weathers the present storm and continues on a noble course depends on only one thing - a thoroughly responsible Press. With the one-man-one-vote trend we are becoming more and more a pure democracy - a democracy which will survive only if we have an enlightened electorate.

If you are absolutely convinced the Press is acting in a thoroughly responsible manner, including the major networks, you might as well save yourself the time and throw this in the wastebasket. But if you have any misgivings at all about such a declaration, I invite you to turn the page.

To Whom It May Concern:

I submit that this Nation is confronted with a very dangerous situation which most people do not recognize. I can't do anything about it, but most of you to whom I hope to send these pages can. If you agree with me, even if only in part, I hope you will do something about it. If you disagree I challenge you to prove me wrong.

I believe that the News Departments of the three major networks have become overwhelmingly, and I fear irrevocably, powerful, and that this power constitutes a grave threat to our form of government, perhaps to our very survival. I fully realize those sound like crack-pot words, so I shall try to explain fully, but first, so you will know I am grinding no personal axe, a word as to who I am, or more precisely, who I am not.

I am neither young nor extremely old, neither rich nor poor. I am not carrying the torch for any minority group, I am not a member of any society, union, lobby or similar organization. My income is in no way affected by the success or failure of any part of the Press, governing body or industry. Philosophically? - just as an example, while I believe in free enterprise I consider those corporations which deliberately break our laws to the detriment of our social or environmental well-being to be among our greatest internal enemies. I am unknown outside of a small circle of friends and business acquaintances. . But perhaps because I am a "nobody" my thoughts are worthy of your consideration. There must be millions more like me.

I should also explain that I am not a student of history and, for a personal reason, my reading is pretty much limited to one daily newspaper. So if you recognize factual errors in my statements please try to not let them influence your evaluation of the presentation as a whole. (You will also soon discover that I am not an expert typist.)

To repeat - I am convinced that the News Departments of CBS, NBC and ABC (radio and television, news and comment) have become overwhelmingly powerful, that their power at this point appears to be irrevocable, and that serious consequences will follow unless equally powerful corrective steps are taken.

First I ask you to think about the various techniques and power sources of the Press in general and the broadcast (electronic) media in particular. Compare, in the following respects, not only the different branches of the Press but also the news business as it is today with what it was before television, and in turn, before radio. See if you do not agree with me that it is a whole new ball game - that the "antics" of the Press which the public had become accustomed to, perhaps even amused by, when we had only the print media, are no longer a laughing matter; that the standards are overdue for critical examination.

Gossip makes great news. This is not new, but should not be omitted from any list of journalistic techniques. It is an extension of the "man bites dog" concept. How delighted is the newsman when he can report it is the man who sings in the choir who is taking money on the job at the bank. Or the modern historian who thinks he can prove that a Paul Revere didn't ride on a patriotic mission intentionally but was really on his way to a drinking bout or something, not that it makes that much difference which opinion is correct. Attacking accepted institutions or precepts, not because they think they are bad but because they are accepted, makes good gossip, hence great news. Whether the techniques available to radio and television, but not to the print media, make it easier for them to transform a little gossip into a lot of news I leave for you to decide.

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Headlining. This is a technique used by both print and broadcast media. Who of us has not been tricked into buying a newspaper because of a headline only to find that the text does not support the headline? The broadcast media take full advantage of this technique. Furthermore the influence on the listener is more subtle, so all the more dishonest. The "headline" is heard but for some reason the "text" is not impressed upon the listener.

Sophisticated news gathering equipment and techniques. Available to the modern network news departments and news services, and apparently to some of today's syndicated columnists, is a whole array of equipment not available just a few years ago. Some of these are no doubt available to the larger newspapers who have the staff and money, others are peculiar to the television people. In addition to television cameras they have video tape, wire tapping, electronic eavesdropping, just to mention the most obvious. Then there are the still cameras with telescopic lenses set up in strategic places (such as in buildings across the street from jury rooms!)

Tail-gating. Because of today's techniques and tempo the modern newsman is so close on the heels of the event, or the individual being watched, that history no longer happens, it is "pushed". Back when the war in Viet Nam was at its peak, and television carried numerous pictures of the action, I found myself envisioning Walter Cronkite coming on the evening news with, "Sorry, there is nothing to report from Viet Nam tonight. They were going to fight today but at the last minute the chopper assigned to take the news cameramen and reporters to the battle area developed serious mechanical difficulties, so the war has been postponed until tomorrow. We understand from a usually reliable source that an investigation is under way to determine if someone on the Vice President's staff may have been responsible for the chopper's failure."

Sensory impact of the broadcast media's tools of the trade. A picture is worth a thousand words, especially when it is on prime time, and the spoken word is more powerful than the printed word. By pictures I mean not only the camera shots the cameramen and editors select to use but also the "picture" of the man on the screen as he reports the news. It is of course pooh-poohed by the Press, but a raised eyebrow does frequently carry more weight than the words being spoken. And raised eyebrows have their counterpart in the spoken word. Related to this is the fact that listening is often a "passive" act (with attendant acceptance without critical examination) while reading requires concentration and is "active" participation. The busy housewife gets snatches of news or comment from radio or television in passing; as also the tired husband waiting for the hockey game to start. There is more opportunity for "brain-washing" by the broadcast media. Ask the Madison Avenue boys.

Review. What is said on radio and television is not subject to reexamination by the listener (except of course by those who are fortunate enough to have the time and equipment to tape it). But the printed word, assuming it has not been put out with the trash, can be reviewed at any time. Would you like to bet that the broadcast people do not sometimes take advantage of this?

Browbeating of interviewees. This "sport", described by the Press itself as comparable to a bull fight, the interviewee being the "bull", is engaged in mostly by television. It may be enjoyed by some of the "victims" even sought out by some as a means of improving their image, but many are angered by it, and Anger is not a Servant of Truth. Under a bombardment of innuendo and loaded questions the subject is made to appear guilty, or a valuable contribution of thought that could have been made never surfaces. But it makes a good show and it is easy to get the impression that the interviewer couldn't care less whether the truth is arrived at or not. I wonder how many good men and women

think of the interview when considering public office, and turn away.

Creation of news. This is a technique peculiar to television. Signs for demonstrators to carry become mysteriously available. Or, if the cameraman was not there for the happening, it is re-enacted under his guidance - making an exciting story whether it is the correct one or not. I think this is where my distrust of the networks began. I still have the image of John Chancellor, at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, as he was being ushered off the floor of the Convention, along with all the other non-delegates in the aisles, trying his level best, by word and by deed, to get the "man with the badge" to rough him up. (P.S. - I had no particular interest at that time as to who would be the Democratic nominee, in case you think that made a difference in my vision.)

Tremendous coverage by the three major networks. I would bet that the number of people who watch and/or listen to the news and comment on CBS, NBC and ABC combined, including their connections through "independent" outlets (I am not familiar with the arrangements), is many times greater than the number who get their information from the newspapers. Newspaper circulation per se may be a poor index. Many people do not get beyond the headlines and the sports, or women's, pages.

To strike a sub-total at this point - I say that from a variety of sources and techniques, some technical in nature, some psychological, the Press in general, the broadcast media in particular, and especially the major networks, now have and use tremendous power in influencing the thoughts of the American people.

As stated above, I believe this power constitutes a grave threat. Why? I maintain the networks have taken the power of decision out of the hands of the people, and to the extent the other branches of the Press have followed suit, they too are guilty. To be sure, we still elect a President and a Congress, and influence them with our letters and telegrams, and in the opinion polls, but we cannot begin to do a good job on this unless we have access to the true facts and are exposed to a variety of opinion. This, I submit, we are not getting.

To illustrate - for some reason, and I wish I knew why, the three major networks have taken a position decidedly to the Left. I am not sure when or why this began, but I don't hear anyone claiming it isn't true. Because of their great power combined with their monopolistic one-sided philosophical stand the majority of Americans get a distorted picture. Let me use socialism, or if you prefer, the "welfare state", as an example. Since about 1932 there has been a tug-of-war on this, usually but not entirely along party lines. The center of the rope has of course moved gradually to the left, in favor of socialistic measures, but only after public exposure to the experiences of other countries and impact on our financial burdens. But with the network's power and in view of their bias, what chance now does the public have in getting the true picture on, say, a completely socialized medical care system? I think it is quite generally agreed that as more and more socialistic measures are adopted, more and more individual freedoms are lost, the ultimate resulting in some form of "dictatorship". When or where (or if) the nation should draw the line on this trend I do not know, but the public should not make its decisions on the information and opinions it gets from a lobby which the networks have become..

This is just one reason why I say we could be in danger of losing our form of government. And if that seems to be too drastic an evaluation there is at least serious

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question as to how far and how fast we can go toward complete socialism without becoming bankrupt, and bankruptcy is a pleasant prospect only by comparison with being a totalitarian state.

Another example is the matter of military strength, and where we should consider our first lines of defense to be. As long as the Russians have an avowed belief that war with the capitalist nations is inevitable, even a must, and as long as they continue to devote so much of their manpower and money to increasing their military might, our comparative strength is of utmost importance. Here again, we find the Leftist media taking the side of the draft dodger, in favor of reducing military strength, and the like, and the pendulum of public feeling, instead of being allowed to swing free, is being held to one side. Who can say how long we can continue to go in that direction without being seriously threatened with becoming another Soviet satellite!

In case you are not impressed with my concern that the three major networks have taken this Leftist position, being perhaps somewhat to the left yourself, let me point out they could just as well be taking a position as far to the Right. (That is, unless there is something inherent in becoming a broadcast journalist that impels one to the Left.) In fact, if the networks fulfill their self-assumed obligation to oppose whatever President is in the White House (and I have heard them say they have that obligation), if Senator Kennedy becomes President they will shift to a stand as far to the Right as they now are to the Left! In that case it is not difficult to imagine a situation equally as threatening to our continuance as a free and democratic nation if (for example) the extreme opposites of socialism and military weakness were to become the order of the day.

But there are other ways of bringing about decay from within, or destruction from without, and as serious as the threat of the monopolistic one-sidedness of the networks is there is something I consider to be even more serious. It runs through all branches of the Press and again, in my opinion, is particularly noticeable in the three major networks. The journalistic morality of far too many members of the news fraternity is unbelievably low! By this I mean they are not only unfair, they are intentionally misleading, intellectually dishonest and irresponsible. I would include outright lying if I could prove that misquoting of statements made by public figures is intentional. It happens that I have a tape recorder by which I can record both AM and FM radio and VHF television. I frequently record important speeches and conferences, then the ensuing news releases and comment. Some of the results are astounding. The complaints of many public figures that the true and clear meaning of their words is so often distorted by the Press is certainly well founded.

Perhaps I am naive but I think the profession of journalism should rank as the most responsible and noble "creative" profession in the land, a notch higher than the public official or educator, and out ranked by the clergy only to the extent that one believes in the here after and that Man's turning from Evil is largely a result of religious teaching and admonition. Certainly Thomas G. Masaryk had some such opinion of the Press in mind when he referred to the "responsible and splendid task of journalism in democracy".

There are probably many reasons for low journalistic morality. The most obvious to me is that news is treated as a commodity which, along with entertainment and a modicum of educational material, is delivered to the public in the hope that it will buy the advertised products and services. For this the advertisers are willing to pay the carriers. So it is up to the carriers to attract a large audience, by making the news exciting and entertaining, and Truth comes out a poor second. The "scoop" complex

also probably plays a part. Too much emphasis on being first, and too little on being right, certainly leads to a lowering of standards. Or is it that a newsman, coming up through the ranks as reporter, which is admittedly a calling filled with hardship, and sometimes danger, develops a callous attitude toward his product (news) and deals with the life blood of the Nation as if it is tomorrow's garbage! But one does not need to pinpoint the cause to recognize the existence of low standards of journalistic conduct.

Perhaps you are saying that journalistic morality is no better or worse than it was, say, 125 years ago. My great great uncle was a newspaper editor and publisher and some of the clippings in his scrapbook (from other papers of course!) sure look like they shaded the truth a bit, to put it mildly. But consider this. A news distortion on one of the major networks today influences many more people proportionately than a similar distortion in a newspaper 125 years ago. Furthermore, "qualitatively" that distortion has a lot more impact on the final result today because, with the one-man-one-vote trend, we are becoming more and more a pure democracy. In the 1840's the public was still relying primarily on the personal judgment of the elected officials, not on a poll of the constituents' sentiments. I think it is astonishing that it is being said that the House of Representatives will use the year-end recess to feel the pulse of their people in order to decide whether or not to proceed with impeachment. Since when did grand juries (and that is what the House would be in this case) go out on the street to see what John Q. thinks? They are even locked up to be sure they are not influenced by the Press or the public. It is things like this that scare me when I consider how low some portions of the Press have descended, and the influence they exert.

One cannot discuss much of anything these days without mentioning "Watergate", certainly not the conduct of the major networks. In order that you can evaluate any bias on my part let me state that, in spite of some very significant accomplishments by Mr. Nixon they should not be considered an offset to impeachment proceedings and, if it is sufficiently clear to the required majority of Representatives and Senators, sitting as individuals using their own judgment, that he is guilty of acts which are grounds for removal as defined by the Constitution, he should be removed from office. I would not want him to resign under fire, unless of course his health becomes a serious factor. As far as the Press is concerned - a veteran Washington Correspondent of the newspaper I read has done me the honor of exchanging a few personal letters with me and he asked me what I thought of the coverage of "Watergate" by the Press. Here are a few excerpts from my reply:

"I cannot understand why they (I am still talking primarily of the major networks) feel they have to go to such diabolical extremes in pursuing the President. The gossipy nature of the whole affair is such that one would think all they would feel they need to do is play it straight. Why all the dishonesty and other things I accuse them of? I can think of some explanations. Maybe their hatred for the President is so great they can't help themselves and don't even recognize their distortions. Or perhaps they feel that their co-workers against Mr. Nixon who are working in the political and courtroom arenas cannot do the job of getting rid of the President without help from them - help in the form of keeping the fires of public opinion burning even if the fires have to be fanned with bias and malice.

"Although I don't doubt there is Communist infiltration in the Press as there is said to be in the other professions, I cannot accept conspiracy, at least not of that sort, as the answer. Could it be that they really "have the goods" on Mr. Nixon but hesitate to reveal all they know because to do so they would also

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be required to reveal, for the public's view and criticism, that they have an espionage system of bugging, wire tapping, stool pigeons, theft, and who knows what other "dirty tricks", which would make the Watergate affair and the Plumbers' activities look like a game of tiddly-winks compared to Monday night football. After all, the Press has been around long enough to have had a lot of practice!"

* Guilty
Since writing that letter it has become even more clear to me that the networks are committed to a campaign of getting the President out of office by hook or by crook. First they were the investigators, which was great. Then they were prosecutors, which was understandable. Then they assumed the role of jury and judge. Now they are trying to be the Supreme Court. How? They are now pushing the concept that it is not necessary to prove the President of "other high crimes, etc."; that he can be impeached for actions and attitudes which result in loss of confidence. That is not what the Constitution says. There are defined ways of amending the Constitution. Edict by a broadcast network is not one of them.

But lest you conclude that my sole purpose is to influence you about impeachment one way or the other (as if I could) let me remind you again that I feel the President should be removed if he is proved sufficiently guilty. I just don't want him removed simply because the networks think, or hope, he is guilty. My file of clippings, and copies of a few letters I have written about the conduct of the Press, goes back to 1968. Their handling of "Watergate" has only served to confirm my suspicions.

To what extent the print media generally, and the portions of the broadcast media not connected with CBS, NBC or ABC, are guilty of gross misconduct like the networks, I do not know. There is no such thing as a composite newspaper I can read to form an opinion. Nor can I listen to all of the radio and television stations in my area, not to mention those beyond the reach of my set. All I can say is, if the glove fits, let it be put on.

So what do we do about a Press, portions of which are as "corrupt" in their own way as any Administration ever was? We can impeach a President, but how does one go about impeaching a CBS? Boycott their advertisers? They advertise so many different products and services we would soon be very hungry, very tired, very cold, and very naked (not to mention very un-inebriated). All I can do is distribute a few copies of this letter and hope for the best. However, as you may have surmised, I do have a few suggestions, weak as they may be. But first let me mention an action which, in my opinion, is definitely not a solution.

Nothing should be done that has the faintest odor of interference with Freedom of the Press. Not only is the Press very sensitive along these lines, as one would expect them to be, but under today's conditions as described herein some elements would make great propaganda out of any such attempts no matter how carefully and fairly they were undertaken. Actually, I think much of the concern expressed by the Press about such interference has largely been faked. I think they know, or should know, that very few people would stand for any real interference with our basic freedoms. The hypocrisy shows when you realize that Dr. McIntire was removed from the air waves without any squawk from the networks, that I heard; not that I agreed with everything he said.

So what is the solution? Obviously the best solution would be for members of the news fraternity themselves to take steps to correct the situation from within their own ranks. It seemed obvious to me that not much progress was made in the race issue until Negroes stopped being almost unanimously against whites and began to criticize

openly the excesses they saw among members of their race. Perhaps the same thing applies to the Press. I have no idea how much "cross-over" there is between the print media and the various branches of the broadcast media to judge what influence one group has on another. I hesitate to suggest the use of self-regulation because I feel that no morality can be legislated, even from within. But there may be other forms of internal control - steps that could be taken to convince those who are out of line that the Press does have tremendous responsibility to the people, and that this responsibility is not being adequately met.

I wonder, however, if there are enough strong voices within the news fraternity, who view the situation somewhat as I do, to bring about a change generated from within. Occasionally, however, one does hear a "voice in the wilderness". Take for example Tom Powell, News Director of WDAU-Television in Scranton, Pa. I quote from his editorials of November 13 and 16, 1973:

"The grand persecution of Richard Nixon will move forward to its ordained goal so long as we accept the validity of contempt citations issued from newspaper offices, Olympian moral judgments rendered by politicians whose own conduct couldn't stand the kind of microscopic examination to which Mr. Nixon's has been subjected and banishment decrees from editorialists whose transparent biases were on display long before Watergate.

"-----only history can finally tell whether Watergate will be a footnote to the record of an Administration of brilliant achievement elsewhere or will be the dominant chapter. But the question finally goes to another intangible - intent. Were the point men who led the journalistic charge that broke through the barriers and engulfed public consciousness out to inform the public or deform the Administration?

"One tentative conclusion about all of this is possible. If the public has been brought around to the view that Watergate is an aberration; that one man is the repository of all the nation's political ills and that driving him from office will immediately cleanse and purify the system, then the press would be guilty of a disservice of staggering magnitude."

Another hopeful sign was Nick Thimmesch's willingness to reveal in his column that it was CBS's Fred Graham who helped one of Nader's lawyers convert one of the White House tapes to cassette so it could be played on home equipment for entertainment purposes, and his complimenting ABC's David Shonmacker for releasing the story in the first place.

Then of course there is that great warrior, William F. Buckley, Jr. The trouble is he talks over the heads of most people so much of the time, including mine, that he will never amount to much. (I put that in for his enjoyment in case I send him a copy of this letter - and he reads it.)

Somehow I seriously doubt there will be much improvement unless there is public outcry against the networks' behavior and unless something is done to strengthen the hands of those on the inside who see the dangers. The best I can think of to bring this about is a campaign of enlightenment which might be entitled, "Everything You Should Want to Know about the Press but Never Asked". It should be carried by as

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many independent and public radio and television stations as possible as well as by the newspapers and magazines. Some parts would be best done on television, such as the interviews.

Here are just a few of the questions such a series of "documentaries" would answer; you will think of many more:-

What is the path of a bit of news from start to finish; how is it gathered, sorted and screened? How is it decided what will be used and what will be left out? What is the process referred to when Group W's KTW says, "At the editor's desk - Don Budd"? In other words, all of the human contacts that ideas or events have from the moment of happening until the public receives them.

How is the Press "organized", that is, what are the working relationships between its many parts - newspapers, magazines, the news services, the major networks, UHF television stations and the miscellaneous AM and FM radio stations? Who owns what? What are the interlocking financial relationships, if any?

What part do the news departments of radio and television play in the overall financial success of the broadcast business? Which branches of the Press are profitable, which are not? Why? What is a typical contract like between a columnist and an outlet?

What is public television and radio? Who controls them? Who makes the decisions on programming? How are they subsidized? Are they truly of, by and for the people, more than the commercial stations, or simply non-profit?

Panels of psychologists would be needed to discuss the "profile" of the newsman. Is he a "type", perhaps different types at different levels? Is there built-in reason to expect he will usually lean more one direction than another philosophically? What motivates the newsman? How does he earn promotion? What are the statistics of age distribution? Sex, educational background, membership in minority groups, all of which affect attitudes?

What axioms or guidelines does the newsman receive, in school or from his superiors, as he learns the trade? Is it true they include:-

1. "Exploit the inevitable", and
2. "Never explain unless someone asks you to. If you're caught, deny it"

I have heard both of these quoted by newsmen, and in such a way as to indicate they didn't see anything wrong! It could be very informative to hear the rest of the list, or is it a fraternity secret?

What are the pros and cons on advocacy journalism? On the fairness doctrine? What controls to promote fairness exist and how are they being used? Have serious attempts been made in the past to interfere with Freedom of the Press? Why? What results?

A very important part of the series would be a "Who's Who in American Journalism", with emphasis on those individuals who directly or significantly affect the major news and comment output. Get them on the air and in front of the cameras so we can see who they are. Have them state their beliefs on the more important philosophical considerations of the modern scene. I submit that any top-ranking member of CBS, NBC or ABC who refused to come on public television, except for health reasons, to discuss his role in connection with the broadcasting of news and comment would be admitting he was guilty of misconduct. I'm assuming the interrogator would be openminded and in search of the truth. The whole series should be done with utmost attention to accuracy. Let the facts speak for themselves whatever message they contain.

Satire, as part of this campaign or separately, could be a very valuable weapon, as it has been throughout history, in moving the public and getting the object of their disaffection to run for cover. What a wonderful opportunity exists today to do a job on the Press! I wish I had the talent. Maybe there is not enough for a Broadway musical, but there certainly is enough for many "shorts" for television. A simple illustration would be a split screen showing something happening on one side and the way it would look as described by a reporter on the other side, any similarity being, of course, entirely coincidental. The idiom, the raised eye-brow exaggerated, the recognizable tongue-in-cheek approach, the all too frequent arrogance, the assumed special privilege, all are great grist that could be ground at the mill of the artist; but I suppose they are all on the other side of the fence from me.

But regardless of the exact format I believe a series of programs (and articles) such as I have tried to picture for you, would attract a very large audience, and I think after it was over the public would be much less gullible and in a far better position to evaluate the validity of the news and comment they read, hear and see. That is, if the programs were done independently of the major networks. Otherwise they would be just another vehicle to consolidate their already powerful position.

In conclusion, I believe that the real tragedy of "Watergate" is not the discovery that misconduct, or worse, exists at the highest levels of Government. Administrations come and Administrations go. The real tragedy is that the Press, having been so deeply involved in all phases of "Watergate", from praiseworthy investigation in the beginning to demagogery at this end, will have created for itself an even greater position of "authority" in the formulation of public opinion, and as a result the public will "extrapolate" to the point of blindly following the Press along whatever path (or non-path) it selects as salable "news du jour".

In management circles it is recognized that responsibility without authority is unworkable. The opposite is worse. If the Press continues to increase its "authority" and does nothing about improving its very questionable sense of responsibility, I see nothing but trouble ahead.

There could be a silver lining. Perhaps those segments of the Press which have gone to such extremes in their eagerness to get the most mileage out of "Watergate", or to get rid of the President, have now shown themselves in their true light, and by so doing an increasing number of people will recognize their journalistic immorality. If this nucleus can be encouraged to believe its suspicions are correct; if they can have some leadership from responsible public officials, and especially from responsible members of the news fraternity, then perhaps a crusade will begin and the scales can eventually be tipped.

As a private citizen I have now done all I can. The rest is up to you.

OB

Ottwill I. Benson, 53 Waverly Road, Havertown, Pa. 19083

January 7, 1974